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MEMOIR

OF

FATHER JAMES HARRIS,
S. J.

BY

FATHER THOMAS HARPER, S.J.

MANRESA PRESS.
1884.
Price Sixpence.

6

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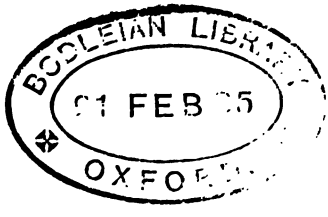
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FATHER JAMES HARRIS.

WHEN a great man dies, one feels that there is a motive force less in the world; and, after a like manner, when a distinguished servant of God, who has done much after his own fashion for the honour of his Lord and the good of souls, however unobtrusively, is called away from his work, there is a natural feeling of sad regret amongst those who knew him. It is not that they doubt the power of God to carry on His own designs to their final issues by other hands; but they are painfully conscious that the labour has in a sense to be recommenced, that there will be a new spirit with a new ideal and new methods, and that—like all mixed human efforts—there must be an admixture of something like patchwork in it. Each man has his own idea, and finds it hard, with the best intentions, to pursue in things practical the idea of another; so that, though the result must be successful because it is for God, yet there is somehow a breach of continuity. These remarks are naturally suggested by the recent death of the subject of this memoir. Father James Harris was evidently destined in the Divine Providence to initiate and develope a most important work, as we shall see; and he did it, but in his own way. Superiors had the wisdom, spite of much adverse criticism, to leave him unmolested

in the practical expansion of his own views; and the result was a noble justification of their confidence.

Father Harris was born on August 25, 1824; and he was wont to boast, with a good-natured satisfaction, that he was a thorough Londoner. His parents belonged to the humbler classes of society; and they gave him just as much of schooling as would suffice for the position of life which, in the ordinary run of events, he was likely to occupy. Over and above, he acquired a slender knowledge of Latin, owing to the kindly interest of Dr. Wesley, a clergyman of the English Establishment in which James Harris was brought up. The circumstances of his life, his social position, and the education he had received, seemed to have marked him out for the pursuit of trade or commerce; and, as a fact, he did enter on his career as foreman or clerk in a hosier's shop. But our good God had other work in store for him. Before going on, however, to this turning point in his history, there are two incidents connected with his earlier life, which ought not to be omitted. It was in the days when the anti-corn-law agitation was at its height; and Mr. James Harris, then a youth of seventeen, was not only admitted upon one of the London committees; but was chosen, among others, to speak at a large public meeting. His success was complete; and he resumed his seat amidst universal cheers and waving of handkerchiefs. In honour of the event, his young friends invited him to a convivial entertainment; and he returned home at so late an hour, that his anxious mother exacted from him a promise that he would once for all abandon such political ambitions,—a

promise which he faithfully kept ever after. Thus it was, that his bright prospects as a public speaker and political agitator were, fortunately for him, nipped in the bud. The other story is yet more interesting, as illustrative of that peculiar power which he exercised, with so much profit to souls, in after life. There was a young man of the upper classes of society, who was a customer at the hosier's shop to which Mr. James Harris was attached. It would appear that, like so many weak-willed and weak-minded youths of our time, he was rapidly going to the dogs,—to make use of a proverbial expression. Spite of the difference of social position, the young man's heart went out to James Harris; and after a time he confided to him fully the sad secret touching the state of his affairs. (There was one special entanglement, about which Mr. Harris would never permit himself to speak, that had brought things to a sudden crisis). His new and thorough friend listened with a sympathetic ear to his troubles, took the matter at once in hand, and saved him from otherwise inevitable ruin. The lad and his delighted mother were not slow to evince their grateful appreciation of the loving service of this faithful hosier's clerk. James Harris had not yet, we believe, attained his majority, when this incident occurred;—a remarkable forestalment of the work he wrought afterwards in the hearts of so many youths intrusted to his care.

It would not be becoming in the writer of this notice to enter into details touching the life of Father Harris up to the time when, in obedience to the Divine call, he craved admission into the Society of Jesus; because the

knowledge of them was gained from communications which he considers to have been more or less confidential. Thus much, however, the writer may say, that never has he been so vividly impressed with the truth of the old proverb, *Truth is often stranger than fiction*, as when he listened to the story which Father Harris told him. This account, which was extended through the leisure hours of some days, was a remarkable example of the almost unique power, which Father Harris possessed, of vividly depicting scenes in which he had taken a part,—all the more effective, because so simple and unaffected. At one moment he compelled you to laugh by his keen humour; at another, to shed tears by his deep pathos. It will be well understood of how great service such a gift must have been to one, whose life was hereafter to be spent in drawing the tender hearts of boys to Jesus and Mary.

There are two events, however, intimately connected with his future, (as yet unimagined by himself), which it will involve no breach of confidence to relate. James Harris was brought up under the teaching of that very respectable section of the Anglican Establishment, which has been quaintly designated as *the high and dry* school. The rising wave of the Oxford Movement had as yet scarcely reached the particular class to which the subject of this memoir belonged. He had been brought up, like most young Anglicans of his time, in a horror and aversion for *Popish* tenets and the Roman Church. At this time there was a poor Irish lad, who attended upon him in his lodgings. He took a great interest in the boy; and, in proportion to the growth of this feeling, so did he become

more and more pained at his little servant remaining a victim to the degrading superstitions, (for such James Harris then esteemed them), in which he had been nursed from the cradle. So, after much deliberation, he one day said to the lad: "Will you read some pious books of mine, if I lend them to you?" The lad prudently deferred an answer, till he had seen his confessor; but a day or two after, armed by the counsel and authority of the good priest, he goes to his young master, and says: "*I* will read the books *you* lend *me*, if *you* will read the books *I* lend *you*." James Harris, who was in perfectly good faith and imagined that there could be but one result from the proposed arrangement, willingly accepts the conditions; whereupon, the Irish boy puts in his hands Bishop Milner's *End of Controversy*. The consequences may be anticipated. The Protestant tracts and books passed out of the boy's mind like water from a duck's back; but, by the goodness of our God, the truths so clearly set forth in the Bishop's little Work were soon sown in that honest and earnest soul. In a short time Mr. Harris became convinced of the truth of the Catholic Faith, and of the falseness of the views on religion which he had formerly held; and proceeded at once to act on the strength of his convictions.

The second incident took place, simultaneously with his reception into the Church. Before this turning-point in his life, he had become engaged to a Protestant young lady, to whom he was deeply attached; and, on his conversion, his mind was naturally much occupied with the difficulties touching this delicate matter, which would in all probability arise from his change of religion,—difficul-

ties which were augmented by a desire that had sprung up in his mind, to serve his God in the priesthood of the Church. Indeed, it was mainly owing to this good inspiration that, as yet quite ignorant of the Catholic ways, he had innocently assumed the full clerical dress. His mind was soon made up; and he acted, on this very trying occasion, with that thoroughness of good faith and honesty of purpose which characterized all his actions through life. Arrayed in his ecclesiastical attire, he at once sought an interview with the young lady; and put his case before her, going straight to the point. "I have become a Catholic, as my dress tells you. I am quite prepared to fulfil the engagement I have made with you. But on one point there must be no mistake: if we have children, they must one and all be brought up Catholics. Do not be in too great a hurry to give me your answer; for, when once you have given it, I shall deem it final, and shall consider myself at liberty to act accordingly." Spite of this kind warning, the lady at once declared that she would never consent to such an arrangement; and James Harris left the house, never to enter it again. Within a day or two, the poor lady, overwhelmed with grief, had changed her mind; and her mother wrote a pathetic letter to Mr. Harris, in which she described her daughter's distress, and besought him to come at once and relieve their anxiety, promising that all should be as he wanted. Mrs. Harris, who was well acquainted with all the circumstances, and was above all things anxious to hinder her son from becoming a priest, was present when this letter arrived; and with considerable emotion she

asked her son, what he intended to do in the matter. "This, mother," was the reply; and he straightway cast the note into the fire. A short time after, he applied for admission into the Society of Jesus.

After some considerable difficulties, such as the enemy of souls is wont to oppose to a true vocation, James Harris was finally sent to Tronchiennes, in order to pass through his two years of probation as a novice. Though he had received, as we have seen, the mere smatterings of a classical education, and knew little or nothing of the French language; by the enforced use of Latin in going to confession, in hearing and repeating instructions, and in certain fixed recreations weekly, and by a half hour's French class each day, instituted to teach the spoken language of the country, it was found that, at the end of his two years, he was able to speak both languages with great facility; though it must be owned that his Latin was then, and remained ever after, somewhat deficient in grammatical accuracy. The wonder is, how he could have done so well under the circumstances; and nothing, save his indomitable energy and devoted perseverance, could have made it possible. During this happiest period of a Jesuit's life, he made considerable advances in solid virtue and piety. He was equally beloved by his fellow novices and his Superiors; and, when the writer of this notice arrived at Tronchiennes, shortly after Brother Harris had quitted, he found the memory of this Brother deeply imprinted in the hearts of all the inmates of the noviceship. Though a thorough Englishman, there was such a *bonhomie* and frankness of character about him,

coupled with exceptional powers of conversation and an unostentatious piety, that in these first years of his religious life he manifested an unusual influence over hearts, which never forsook him to the day of his death.

After he had taken his first vows at the end of his noviceship, Brother Harris was sent to Namur, in order to pursue his philosophical studies. He set to work at once with the most stubborn energy; and it was not long ere he came to the fore in the weekly and monthly disputations. In addition to these difficult labours, he was employed by his Superiors, as being an Englishman, to teach an English class twice a week in the College to which the Jesuit Philosophate was then attached. As these classes of modern languages were attended at the option of the boys, and the youth in the College of Namur were celebrated at the time for a spirit impatient of control or discipline; it will be easily understood that Brother Harris' task was no easy one. It was now, that his marvellous aptitude for governing boys began to manifest itself. At first the class was unruly as usual. Riotous conduct was the order of the day. But it did not last a week. After the second *lecture* (as it is there called), Brother Harris had effectually reduced them to silent obedience and due order of discipline. Such success could not fail to attract the attention of the Superiors of the College; and an occasion presently offered itself of testing his remarkable powers to the fullest extent. It should be premised, that, on account of his gifts in this respect, he had been appointed, at the end of his philosophy, to be assistant-*surveillant* in the College. The story shall be

told, as it has been described by one who studied at Namur about 1878. "There is an anecdote Father Harris used to tell of himself, and which happened, when he was stationed at Namur, where the memory of the *gros petit Anglais*, (as he used here to be called), is still kept fresh in the minds of all, by the tradition of the following unexpected feat in the management of boys, which he displayed under very trying circumstances. The boys here" (at Namur) "as in most French Colleges are always addressed by the title of *Monsieur*; and this, with a few indulgences permitted in those Colleges, has tended to create a *quasi*-independent spirit in their relations with their Superiors. *Mr.* Harris (for so he was at the time) seems to have been an assistant-*surveillant;* and as he had introduced into the College football and other English games, in which the boys through his influence had been ordered to take part,—although they thought it a little below their dignity,—it had given him a sort of reverential respect and authority over them, more than any of the other members. The boys, on returning from the holidays, naturally brought back with them a sort of undisciplinary spirit; and, as the Prefect for the year was of a meek disposition and thus not able to entirely oppose their boisterous and unruly conduct, a sort of revolt arose in the College. Night after night the noise and talking in the study-hall increased; until it ended in an open defiance of the authority of the Prefect. In vain did the poor Prefect appeal to the young rascals; in vain did he bring in the Prefect of Study. Even the Rector was powerless to quell the repeated nightly disturbance. Not knowing what to do, they at last

resolved to try what an English Prefect might do; and thus called for Father Harris. In explaining the situation to him, (which he already well knew), the Rector mentioned that all that had as yet been done to put an end to the disturbance, had been of little avail. Father Harris listened; and, after a moment of consideration, undertook the reform on two conditions, which after a little while were granted. The first was, that he was to have full power over the boys, and the second, that he was to have a substantial dinner. Father Harris was, therefore, appointed Prefect for the next night, amidst the anxious expectation of the whole of the community-portion of the house. At the usual hour, the next day, the boys entered the study-hall; and Father Harris ascended the pulpit; whilst the noise and talking, beginning with a whisper, now increased until it had reached an uproar. Father Harris, however, did not seem to mind it, but allowed the boys for the present to have their fling, amusing himself meanwhile with a book. In about an hour's time he descended the pulpit, and, having carefully locked the door behind him, quietly went off to his dinner. In about an hour he returned and re-ascended the pulpit, amidst the astonished looks and amazement of the boys below him. But the noise and talking went on; so Father Harris went on with his reading. The supper-bell rang; but Father Harris gave no signal for the end of study. Why should he? He had just had his dinner; and his friends below had not yet earned their supper. This he explained in the politest manner; at which the noise began again as bad as ever. Father Harris, however, had no reason to

give in, nor had he any such intention; and the boys were beginning to see it. The time for supper passed by, and in due course the time for recreation and bed; but the boys were not released. As the time for bed passed, and Father Harris seemed as immoveable as ever; a change came over the boys, and a calm ensued, in which Father Harris again explained that, having had a good dinner himself, he did not feel any want of food, and that he could not in conscience let them out, since as yet they had not begun to study. He then told them that it was high time to begin; as he had no intention of letting them out, until they had done so. The boys took the hint; and, after a calm, hard, study for two hours,—during which one could have heard a pin drop,—he quietly opened the study-door, and kindly advised them to get to bed as soon as possible. This so completely cured the Namur boys of their revolutionary disturbances, that, even to the present day, there has never been found any necessity to repeat the same severe punishment; and the name of Father Harris has been handed down from generation to generation in sacred remembrance."

The writer can testify by his own experience to the power of the then *Mr.* Harris over the boys at Namur. He was appointed to teach one of the English classes while Mr. Harris taught the other. In a week or two the writer's class became so riotous, that Father Harris in his kindness proposed an exchange of classes; and the writer was appointed to the higher school, which had been drilled by the powerful Prefect into admirable order. In a few weeks, the higher class became as disorderly as the lower

had previously been; and remained so till the end of the scholastic year, much to their teacher's chagrin. Such was the estimation in which Brother Harris was held by the authorities of the Belgian Province, that they made a generous arrangement with the English Provincial, in order to be allowed to retain his services as Prefect for four years.

On the expiration of the term of his engagement at Namur, he was sent for his theology to Louvain at his own instance; and here the present writer, who was in his third year of theology, came across him again. We do not purpose delaying upon these years of his scholastic life. Suffice it to say, that he displayed the same aptitude and zeal in the study of theology, as he had previously shown in that of philosophy; and at the end of his fourth year stood a public act,—an honour most rarely conferred at St. Beuno's,—which, taking into account his deficiency in the classical languages, was on the whole satisfactory.

After his priesthood and the conclusion of his theological studies, he was successively made Professor of Moral Theology and Minister at St. Beuno's; both of which offices he fulfilled to the general content of the community. It was here that one peculiar characteristic of the subject of this notice was notably displayed. Even his most devoted admirers could not maintain, that either of these posts was altogether suited to the genius of Father Harris; yet he succeeded. How was this? One may say of him with truth, that, whatever he undertook, he threw his whole heart and soul into it. For him, so long as it lasted, the appointed post was *the* important

post in the Province; and his zeal in its discharge exempted him,—some would say overmuch,—from the deadening and painful influences of what goes by the name of *red-tape.* If, at times, the office became a little too nearly identified with the person representing it, who can blame him? Such is the not unnatural outcome of an enthusiasm, acting on a fervent imagination, and restricted to a particular channel which it has more than half scooped out for itself.

But the time has at length arrived for his entering upon that path, in which the Divine Providence had arranged that he should walk during the remainder of his days. One, who knew him well and clearly recognised his special gifts, now calls Father Harris to his side, in order that the College at St. Francis Xavier's, Liverpool, might be re-animated and grow to its due stature under his skilful and inventive care. It would require more space than can be conveniently allowed to these obituary notices, if we should attempt to follow each step he took in his scheme of reformation, sustained throughout by the unreserved confidence and sympathy of his Superior. It will be enough to reveal the principal foundation upon which he built. As the College found itself planted in the midst of a thickly populated commercial town, and as the boys returned to their homes at night; it is plain, that the dangers to their innocency and simplicity would be greatly multiplied. Accordingly, Father Harris realized full well that there was but one effectual safeguard, and he began at once to meditate a plan for instilling a perfect spirit of practical devotion in their young hearts. To this

end he gradually and with great tact and prudence established his famous *Brigade*, which he grafted upon the confraternity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and that of Mary Immaculate. Previously to its establishment, he had strenuously endeavoured to attract the affectionate confidence of "*his boys*," as he was wont to call them; and in this important point, with him to endeavour was to succeed. In his preliminary essay, the proposed constitution of the Brigade was essentially democratic. Almost all the appointments, regulations, admissions, expulsions, expenses, &c., were submitted to the popular vote; and, though afterwards he saw fit to introduce considerable modifications, yet a liberal control has remained in the hands of the youthful associates to the present hour. The intention of the institution of this sodality is twofold: First of all; with the help of God's grace, to elevate the moral and religious tone of the College by the example and influence of a select band of boys, specially trained in the service of Jesus and Mary. The second to allure the children into a voluntary yielding of themselves more and more to the fatherly supervision of their Director. The inner spirit of this noble conception may be best gathered from the formula of admission. The following is the solemn promise pronounced by the candidates on this occasion:

"I, N.N., do freely, seriously, and sincerely promise that, if admitted into this Brigade, I will, as far as depends on me, be regular in my attendance at the daily and weekly meetings, that I will do my best to imitate angelical purity in thought, word and deed; for this

purpose avoiding all dangerous amusements, books, and companions; that I will be serious, constant, and diligent at study, striving hard to obtain the highest marks for conduct and application; that I will be obedient to my Director and to my Masters; and that in all my bearing I will do honour to God my Saviour and His Adorable Heart. Moreover, I further promise and declare, that I will return home direct after night studies, and enter into no conversation with any one, my companions or immediate relatives alone excepted. And I further promise and declare, that I will never be guilty of any misconduct in the streets, which might reasonably bring disgrace upon the College or the Brigade."

From this document it will be seen, that it was far from the thoughts of Father Harris to mould a staff of pious nonentities; but that, according to his plan, a fresh stimulus was given to study, as one principal means of keeping the lads out of harm's way, and as a sure proof of a sincere devotion to Jesus and Mary, for Whose sakes they were taught to be diligent and righteously ambitious. Much of this principle of life is to be found in Catholic sodalities generally; and the same may be said of many of the devotional exercises with which this Brigade of young soldiers of the Cross was surrounded. It was in the practical application of his principles, that Father Harris evinced his peculiar power. Personal influence was the main-spring of his direction; and he began by trying to win the entire confidence of his boys, who came to him in all their troubles and difficulties, as to a father and their

sincerest friend. In order to secure this confidence, he sedulously ignored all information gained from such sources, in the external direction of the school; keeping it as a sacred trust, to be used exclusively for purposes of private counsel and guidance. He further encouraged a manifestation of defects in the private meetings; and while discouraging idle tattle, nevertheless invited free communication in all matters gravely affecting the morals or faith of the pupils of the College. The whole idea of his arrangements was borrowed from the constitutions and rules of the Society of Jesus; so much so, indeed, that—to quote the words of one of the kind contributors to his obituary, who was himself at the College,—"Those who came afterwards to learn the rules of the Society, were surprised to find that they had been keeping these same rules unconsciously, and perhaps when their thoughts were but little directed to the religious state." His general method in carrying on this grand work in the best interests of the little ones of Jesus and Mary, may be more clearly understood by the following interesting extract from a letter written by a Father, who for six years was a master under his presidency: "His Brigade of the Sacred Heart was his special and favourite work for the spiritual good of the scholars. Many were the *experiments* through which a candidate had to pass, before he reached full membership; and when he succeeded in attaining what I may call his *profession*, then he became a marked boy"—that is to say a boy of mark—"in the College. For such as these there were special privileges, special places in the church, study-place, and playground when *ranks* were

formed at the end of playtime, and of course *special example* was expected from them ; and woe betide the Brigade boy, if he was found wanting ! They had also their six-monthly renovation of *Brigade promises*, previous to which the external faults of the members were solicited, and given at the Sunday meeting. I mention this to show, that, rightly or wrongly, (it was a much disputed point at the time), Father Harris seemed to wish to model his Brigade on the Society. It was for the Brigade boys, in the first instance, that he established *night-studies ;* but afterwards others were admitted, and the night-school plan grew to large dimensions for a town. *It*, too, was a privilege ; and here was Father Harris, heart and soul. It was *his* work ; and he really did stick to it manfully. Seldom would he allow any one to take his place, unless he was obliged to be absent.

"His retreats to the boys were real marvels ; and I think only once, or at most twice, has any one else given that retreat, while he was at the College. He gave it last August. His power of illustrating the great truths was wonderful. He had a story ready for every case ; and he rarely repeated his stories from year to year. He had such a power of invention ; and dressed up old figures in new garments, so that they appeared quite new. While speaking of his retreats, let me also refer to those which he gave elsewhere, especially at Dalbeth, (Glasgow) ; where I have been so often, and where I know how much he was valued. Both with the Reformatory children and the Penitents of the Good Shepherd he was most successful. For many years during the summer holidays, after spending

a little time with his mother and sisters and brother in London, he went his round;—to Arno's Court in Bristol, to Dalbeth, and sometimes to the Reformatory of St. Bernard's, Leicestershire. Great was the disappointment both last year and this year, when news came to Dalbeth that his health would not allow him to give the retreat."

We must go on with our extracts from this letter, not only because of their intrinsic interest for the friends of our lamented Father, but because that which follows touches upon another part of his missionary labours, to which we should otherwise have been precluded by want of space from referring. "His sermons," continues the writer, "occasional though they were, and his public missions at St. Francis Xavier's, showed the power and the mind of the man. His meditations to the people were very thrilling; and the way he acted the *worldling*, and other characters that he wished to bring before their notice, was very real, and often very grotesque. When before an audience in a public hall, or before a congregation, he was self-possessed to a wonderful degree; and yet naturally he was very shy."

Yet one more extract from the same letter: "In many things, I should say, that he was very simple; but in others he was very shrewd, and could *see ahead*, as people would say. He was very methodical in the way he kept his books, and a capital accountant. The College books, up to the last month that he was there, will show this. . . His name was, as you know, a great power in the town; and all must admit, that to him is owing, in a very large measure, the position which the College now has in the Province."

It was during the heavy labours of his office in the College, that an insidious disease began to manifest itself, which was destined ultimately to consign him to a premature grave. He was plainly informed by medical authority touching its fatal nature, and warned that, unless he gave up his present occupations, he would pay the penalty with his life. To continue in the words of another correspondent: "It must not be forgotten, that it was owing to his devotion to his boys, that Father Harris died so soon. I remember his telling me, some years ago, that the doctors promised twenty more years of life, if he would moderate his zeal in working for the boys; and threatened him with death within seven years, if he did not take their advice. I think no one can doubt that he has, like the True Shepherd, offered his life for his sheep. I have known him myself for years to have spent his nights in a hot, close, study place; and never absent from his post, except under the most urgent necessity." In his last very short illness,—to quote the words of one who was among the last to visit him, and who knew him well,—"in the conversations I had with him, he spoke with interest and affection of his College and the boys. He was quite resigned to die; but, if his life was spared, he hoped to carry on his work at St. Francis Xavier's till the end." The same Father, who was the then Rector of St. Francis Xavier's and had started him in his work, thus describes his state of mind on the day before his death: "He knew from the first, how serious his condition was. 'The most I can hope for is, to be set on my legs for a time, and do another stroke of work before I die.' He told me the same thing several times."

It may possibly be asked, whether the fruits of his apostolic zeal became apparent even in this world. To this question we can unhesitatingly answer in the affirmative. Among his children, numerous were the vocations to the Society; and one who was for a time Master of Novices—the same Father who first called him to St. Francis Xavier's—had formed such an idea of these Liverpool postulants, that he wrote of them in terms of high praise to Father Harris, adding, "the more you send of this sort, the better."

But, after all, in regard of this good Father the words of St. Paul are fulfilled: "You are our epistle," my dear boys, "written in our hearts, which is known and read by" many; that is to say, his pupils, whom he carried in his bosom, are the best testimony to the success of his evangelical labours on their behalf. One, now in the Society, wrote to Father Harris: "I hope the Brigade is still the sterling little band it was, a source of continual consolation to you, and of edification to us all. There are few things I look back to with greater pleasure than the Sunday afternoons spent with the Brigade. . . . I have gathered lessons and edification and consolation there at the foot of the altar of the Sacred Heart, which I hope to carry with me through life." Another wrote about the same time from Ushaw: My thoughts often return with pleasure to the days I spent in dear St. Francis Xavier's. I must bear testimony, as I and many others have borne before, that those days were the most agreeable, the most free from anxiety, even if they were the most thoughtless of my life. I owe a heavy debt of gratitude to my *Alma*

Mater,—a debt I shall always be glad to repay, if repay I ever can, even in part." Another writes from Manresa: "Every one speaks with respect of St. Francis Xavier's." In a touching memorial of him, by one of his former scholars published in a Catholic journal on the news of his death—an affectionate tribute to his worth, which lack of space alone hinders us from giving *in extenso*—the writer says: "Hundreds there are, like myself, who feel that the seeds of whatever good have borne fruit within, were planted by Father Harris." Testimonials of a like nature might easily be multiplied; but our readers are well aware that a notice must not be allowed to assume the bulk of a biography. As it is, the writer has been compelled to omit much interesting detail, which has been kindly communicated to him.

There are two special traits, however, in the character of Father Harris, which it would be impossible to pass by altogether. The one is, his intense love of his vocation. Here, again, a trustworthy witness shall be produced, who writes as follows: "I remember him once saying to us, when boys: 'I have now gone through my whole course in the Society. I assure you, that I would consider I entered cheaply, if the condition of entrance had been to go down from here to Timbuctoo on my bare knees.' All this was not mere words; as all those who ever knew him had reason to know." It was no transient impression. In his last moments he said to a Father who visited him: "I always loved the Society; now I adore her. I can't tell you how kind every one has been to me. I can never forget it."

The other trait, which no one who had even the slightest acquaintance with Father Harris can easily forget, was his exquisite humour and *sense* of humour. This great gift in the natural order, assisted by a sufficient knowledge of music to enable him to accompany himself on the piano, afforded him not unfrequent opportunities for the exercise of charity in helping to amuse his brethren during their recreation ; and his *song of the cheese*, composed and sung by himself in commemoration of a very funny incident that occurred during one of his journeys, is not likely to be forgotten by those who heard it. But he did not limit the use of these powers to such occasions or to such an end, however laudable. We have heard from a trustworthy witness, how he served himself of them in the pulpit ; and it may be safely said that they were of priceless service to him in his dealings with *his boys*. "In the playtime also," writes one of the number "it was his delight to walk up and down, surrounded by a crowd of boys, who would listen to his fascinating conversation, and in turn talk freely before him with boyish simplicity." Again : He had instituted a custom of giving out to the different classes every Monday morning cards containing an account of their conduct and application. These he would read out publicly himself; and in any other person's hands the ceremony would have probaly become in a short time not a little tedious. "Yet," as we are told, "it was wonderful how he always found something fresh to say to almost each boy,—something which the individual might remember during the week. The manner in which he sometimes read these cards out was truly ludicrous.

His comments were solemn, yet ridiculous,—stern, yet funny ; and the *inner consciences* of the lads would fortell to them what they might expect." It must be owned that this gift is liable to abuse ; and requires on the part of its possessor careful governance. Nevertheless, touching Father Harris the same witness declares, that "whether before the general public, or before or amongst the boys, it never diminished the respect which they had for him,—especially so in the case of the boys ; and," he very justly adds, "that is what few could succeed in."

As to his other excellences,—his sincere and childlike family affection, his simplicity of character, the ease and promptness with which he laid to sleep little resentments or, rather, soreness of feeling at offences inevitable in the case of one who was possessed of such keen sensitivity, his practical piety, shrewd common sense, and discernment of character,—we are compelled to rest satisfied with the enumeration ; for it is time to pass on to the last moments of his life, and offer to the reader what little we have been able to glean about them. In the summer of last year Father Harris was prostrated by a very severe and perilous development of his old complaint ; and prayers were offered up in the Colleges and Houses of the Society for his recovery. He so far recovered as to justify the hope, that our good God had yielded to the fervent petitions offered up on his behalf. But towards the close of the autumn he suffered a relapse, which ended with his death. He had come up to London ; and was on a visit to his brother, when the symptoms assumed a most alarming form. The medical man, whom he had occasion-

ally consulted for some time, and who was carried off by the same fatal disease three or four days before Father Harris, could afford no hope of his recovery. On Monday, the 3rd of December, the symptoms became so pronounced, that all, himself included, were persuaded that he had not long to live. The Father, who kindly visited him on the evening of that day,—his Rector at Liverpool, his Rector again at the last—represents him as having been very drowsy, but that, on being aroused by his presence, "he talked willingly enough, but confessed that he felt a great disposition to sleep." "In the conversations I had with him," he goes on to say that Father Harris expressed himself, as "quite resigned to die." The same Father adds: "He edified me very much by his charity. He had not the smallest complaint to make of any one. He had only words of love and gratitude for every one. . . . He bore his pains and sufferings, and his depression which always goes with diabetes, very patiently and bravely." On this the last evening of his life, his bodily condition was such, that the priest of Kentish Town (where Father Harris was then lying sick), having consulted with the Superior referred to above, determined to give him the Sacraments in the morning. But a violent crisis set in, shortly after midnight; and the sufferer "remarked to those who were with him, 'I feel very like dying; but perhaps it will pass.'" The priest was immediately sent for; but, before he could get to the house, the end had come. "After a short agony, the blood seemed to rush to his head. His face became quite purple; and he was dead. The colour gradually became more natural" after

death; "and, when I saw him laid out a few hours later, there was no trace of what was probably syncope of the heart." He was buried in Fulham Cemetery; and a Requiem Mass was solemnly celebrated for the repose of his soul at Farm Street, and, subsequently, at St. Francis Xavier's, Liverpool. Few are there, if any, among those who knew him and his constant labours, but will endorse the last words with which the Father, who had known him so long and intimately and has supplied all the information about his final illness, closes his letter: "He worked like a Jesuit, and died like a Jesuit." *Beati mortui qui in Domino moriuntur. Amodo jam dicit Spiritus, ut requiescant a laboribus suis; opera enim illorum sequuntur illos.**

* Apoc. xiv. 13.

APPENDIX.

(Taken from the *Liverpool Daily Post.*)

FATHER HARRIS.

BY ONE OF HIS OLD BOYS.

IT is impossible adequately to express the feelings which thrilled through me to-night when I heard that the teacher and guide of my boyhood was dead. As I try to collect my thoughts, recollections crowd into my mind, and incidents of my school life—trivial perhaps in themselves, but all helping to fix more vividly in my mind the image in his every aspect of the man whom we loved so well. I can see him, as I did for the first time on an autumn day long years ago, when my father brought me up to Salisbury Street to commence my career as a student in St. Francis Xavier's College. I can see, as if it were only yesterday, the irresistible smile of kindly benevolence that seemed to belong of necessity to his face. I can hear the words of advice and encouragement which made me feel as if I were only coming back, after a long absence, into the society of old friends. I can remember, now with pleasure,

now with regret, the various occasions of my schoolboy history which brought me into direct contact with him, either to receive his welcome approbation or that gentle censure which every schoolboy of the common-place type is doomed to merit at times. Not that contact with him was of rare occurrence, for his personality was bound up entirely with the place, and no event took place from year's end to year's end but seemed to move around with Father Harris as its central figure. In the morning, as we came into the "study-place," there he stood to receive us and to mark with due displeasure the unpunctual ones. Thence we proceeded to the church for the morning Mass and devotions, which opened the work of the day—and the boys' Mass, as it was always called, was invariably celebrated by Father Harris. In the school hours which followed, we would perhaps have a visit from him if any announcement of importance had to be made. His office was always open, of course, during schooltime to transact business, but if any boy had need of advice or of encouragement he knew that at any time the door of "the office" was open to him, and that the truest of friends was within. It was well known among the boys that the best and surest way for the unfortunate who might have got into any of the usual schoolboy scrapes, was to go straight to Father Harris at once and tell him the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. For that class of boys, which is said unfortunately to exist everywhere, known as "sneaks," he had the most profound and thoroughly English contempt, and many a story could be told by old "College boys" of the way in which offenders of this kind

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im with which he seemed made to inspire all who
n. How many, indeed! and what a sad, sad
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mournful news reaches them that his lifework, so
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REQUIESCAT IN PACE.

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had received a well-merited snubbing. In the playtime also (though in late years, as he became more and more the victim to the painful malady which afflicted him, I am told he was compelled to somewhat give up the practice) it was his delight to walk up and down surrounded by a crowd of boys, who would listen to his fascinating conversation, and in turn talk freely before him with boyish simplicity. Nor were these, as might be supposed, who flocked around him, only a certain regular set of boys, anxious for selfish motives to attract his favour. The custom was a universal one, and the "model boy" and the unlucky one in temporary disgrace of his neglected task, would approach with equal freedom, animated only by a spirit of affection and loyalty. In the evening, from six to eight, he was wont to take charge of the "study-place," an institution of his own, whereby the boys who lived near enough could come to study their lessons for the morrow with the silence and security so valuable and necessary. The day's work concluded with his blessing, often preceded by a few words of counsel full of that wisdom and genial humour so peculiarly his own. By this constant contact with him, it is no wonder that the boys grew to look upon him less as a mere prefect than as a kind of spiritual father, to be respected and loved with a reverence and an affection only second to that which they owed their natural parents. How many there are of us—some grave men of business by this time, lawyers, doctors, and what not, and others wearing the badge of the same noble Order as himself—how many there are, now scattered over the face of the world, who, in those happy days of schooltime,

learned to know him, and to be filled with that devotion towards him with which he seemed made to inspire all who knew him. How many, indeed! and what a sad, sad prayer of heartfelt sorrow will rise up from their hearts when the mournful news reaches them that his lifework, so gloriously fulfilled, is over, and that his is for ever the rest of the faithful servitor; and hundreds there are, like myself, who feel that the seeds of whatever good have borne fruit within us were planted by Father Harris, and in our hearts, mourning for his loss, joyous in the knowledge of his certain reward, his memory will for ever live.

REQUIESCAT IN PACE.